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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001101

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DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT, INR/NESA
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06-30-14
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KOCI](#) [CE](#) [UNICEF](#) [LTTE](#)
SUBJECT: LTTE BACKSLIDES ON CHILD SOLDIERS, REPORTEDLY
SEEKS TO RECRUIT YOUNG ADULTS

Ref: Colombo 706

(U) Classified by James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY. In a June 26 statement, UNICEF has blasted the LTTE for accelerating its efforts to recruit children in LTTE-controlled areas, despite promising signs this April when the Tigers released hundreds of children. Since April, UNICEF has received 159 reports of forcible and voluntary child recruitment. At the same time, the LTTE is publicly recruiting for an "auxiliary force" of 1,500 youth, whose members in the north and east would work under the auspices of the LTTE police, but would also act as a standby military unit for the Tigers. Perhaps motivated by a "staffing crunch" since the April LTTE split, the Tigers clearly have no compunction about doing whatever is needed to fill their ranks. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) In a June 26 statement, UNICEF blasted the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for accelerating its efforts to recruit children in the north and east, despite releasing hundreds of children in April of this year and earlier promises to stop the practice. The statement called for the Tigers to release recently recruited children and to take steps "to the highest levels of the LTTE to ensure children are no longer taken by the organization." UNICEF charged that the LTTE violated the Action Plan for Children Affected by War it signed with the GSL in June, 2003 in which the Tigers said they would stop recruiting children into its ranks, either voluntarily or through coercion. In April, the LTTE officially released 269 children and expressed a willingness to provide a formal release for over 1,300 other children who went home when LTTE breakaway eastern rebel leader Karuna disbanded his cadres (see reftel). UNICEF's current criticism of the LTTE stems from accelerated underage recruitment after the April releases. The LTTE has not yet responded to this UNICEF statement.

3. (C) Despite hopes that the Tigers would cease recruiting children, UNICEF has received 159 reports of LTTE child recruitment since April: predominantly in the north, but also in the east. In a June 29 conversation with poloff, acting UNICEF Representative Yasmin Ali Haque explained that the LTTE was recruiting more children than it was releasing, and that most of the newly recruited children were not re-recruited (previously released) children. The newest underage recruits, according to Ali Haque, are a mix of voluntarily and forcibly recruited children.

4. (U) Media reports June 27 highlighted another LTTE recruitment campaign: this time a publicly recruited "auxiliary force" of 1,500 youth (18-25 years) in the north and east, whose members would work under the auspices of the LTTE police, but would also act as a standby military unit for the Tigers. Recruits would receive six months of "armed training" and work on rehabilitation, road and building construction, forest conservation and agriculture projects under the administrative structure of the LTTE. In response to formal advertisements the LTTE placed in independent and Tiger-controlled newspapers in the North, more than 300 men and women reported to LTTE police headquarters in Kilinochchi last week for interviews. According to news reports, recruits will earn 8,500 Rs (approximately USD 85) per month, must be citizens of "Tamil Eelam," and are subject to a strict screening process to ensure they are not loyal to breakaway LTTE leader Karuna. LTTE "Police Chief" Nadesan told a prominent English weekly, "We will provide the military training and place them in various LTTE projects, but when the need arises we use them for fighting."

5. (C) COMMENT. The uptick in Tiger recruitment almost certainly stems from the LTTE's need to replace cadre who were decommissioned by Karuna in April, as well as a

desire to increase overall cadre numbers should the conflict resume. UNICEF's statement on LTTE backsliding makes clear that the Tigers will do whatever they feel is necessary to fill the ranks. If press reports are accurate that the LTTE is offering significant recruitment incentives to young adults in the north and east, many may be motivated by economics to sign up.
END COMMENT.

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